

INTRODUCTION

This position reports directly to one of the following: a State Plant Health Director (SPHD), a Port Director or a Regional Program Manager. The incumbent serves as a technical specialist and liaison between field work units, Regional, and national offices on issues regarding export certification, and is responsible for ensuring the continuity and quality control of the export certification program. The work includes interpreting foreign quarantine regulations to facilitate international trade, reviewing Federal Phytosanitary Certificates (FPC), coordinating and providing export training for Cooperators and Federal Officers within the assigned area, and auditing facilities and Accredited Certification Official (ACO) records.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

--- Serves as technical specialist with the responsibility to interpret foreign quarantine regulations and reviews a minimum established percentage of FPCs issued by Cooperators and Federal Officers for compliance with existing policy and foreign import requirements.

--- Identifies and documents major mistakes on FPCs as outlined in the Export Certification Manual and notifies State Plant Regulatory Official (SPRO), appropriate officials and/or personnel of the mistakes. Coordinates with appropriate officials to recommend and provide training as necessary.

--- Serves as liaison with field (local/State, and Region) and PPQ Export Services (ES) at headquarters by maintaining an active relationship with the SPHD, Port Director (OIC), PPQ Officers, State and County cooperators, exporters, and industry personnel in export certification matters, and informs the ES and SPHS of potential problem issues.

--- Maintains a record of accredited cooperators and Federal Officers within the ACO national database, informing Port Directors, SPHDs, and other appropriate officials when certification will be due. Notifies the Export staff when cooperators and/or federal employees retire or separate. Responsible for determining and maintaining eligibility and access status of issuing employees required by Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance and Tracking System (PCITS) and the North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO) accreditation standard for individuals.

--- Screens and forwards a list of State cooperator nominees, along with their qualifications to ES to determine their eligibility to issue FPCs in conformance with federal regulations.

--- Determines the need for, develops, coordinates and conducts export training for all accredited cooperators and federal officers in the designated area of jurisdiction. Ensures accredited cooperators and federal officers complete training successfully and certified, and are re-certified

every three years. Provides initial and refresher export certification training to improve the performance of authorized certification officials to meet or exceed the requirements of the NAPPO Standard for ACO.

--- Develops and conducts training lessons, practice exercises, job aids, and exam questions that cover unique export certification situations beyond basic procedures which may require soliciting input from industry representatives and recognized experts outside of the Agency.

--- Maintains the Export Certification Manual and associated materials such as Phytosanitary notes and is proficient in using EXCERPT, PCIT, and other Internet based tools. Responsible for notifying Export Services (ES) when errors appear in the EXCERPT database. Maintains current emergency backup system as assigned for EXCERPT and PCIT in case of system failure.

--- Informs ES where import permit requirements are different from EXCERPT summary requirements.

--- In ensuring the continuity and quality control of the export certification program, audits a sample of phytosanitary certificates issued by accredited cooperators and PPQ Officers for compliance with established policy and foreign import requirements, identifies and documents mistakes, and forwards discrepancies to originators or other appropriate officials. Recommends revocation of individual certification when warranted.

--- Serves as a point of contact and expert for phytosanitary programs in an assigned area. Familiarity with agriculture production and commodity management practices in specialized areas to give expertise that could lead to recommendations of modification in practices at the producer/local/State levels in ways that better support export protocols.

--- Assists APHIS Headquarters with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

--- Assists State and National Investigative and Enforcement Services Staff (APHIS-IES) and PPQ (State and National Offices) in researching and obtaining information related to cases involving the issuance of phytosanitary certificates.

--- Prepares monthly accountability report for user fee monies associated with export activities.

--- Investigates issuances of FPCs for detained shipments for the purpose of verifying documents, adherence to certification policy and procedures, and conformance with foreign countries' plant import requirements.

--- Conducts field audits involving review of facilities, FPCs issued, and required ACO records to ensure conformance with Federal regulations, policies, and procedures, and with PPQ's obligations to bilateral agreements, protocols, MOUs, and International Standards.

--- Maintains required ACO information in the National ACO database.

FACTOR LEVELS

1. Knowledge Required: Knowledge of the principles and concepts of PPQ programs, e.g., quarantine regulations and inspection procedures in order to interpret a variety of regulations and to recommend a course of action.

In-depth knowledge of the PPQ export program and technical and non-technical material concerning foreign plant quarantines and regulations in order to compile information and develop and review documents and records necessary for the Office of the Deputy Administrator, Headquarters Staff officers and others, to negotiate terms and conditions of phytosanitary procedures with foreign officials, State regulatory officials, industry representatives, and the general public.

Through knowledge of PPQ programs, regulations and treatment methods is needed to effectively recommend adaptive procedural techniques consistent with agency programs.

The incumbent must have a working knowledge of instructional materials and job aids that guide on-the-job performance, including measurement of test validity and reliability.

Ability to logically and concisely communicate technical information, both orally and in writing, in order to provide training and to exchange information necessary to effectively carry out program objectives.

Knowledge of foreign and domestic in-transit guidelines for commodities requiring phytosanitary certifications.

Ability to use pre-written computer software programs to accomplish assigned projects and activities.

2. Supervisory Controls: The supervisor outlines the overall objectives and resources available.

The incumbent interprets policy on own initiative in terms of agency objectives and independently, carries out work within the assigned work area, including the order and priority of projects or tasks and the technical approach and methodology to be used. For controversial, political, and highly unusual issues or requests, the incumbent confers with the supervisor for problem resolution and guidance. Completed work is periodically reviewed by the supervisor for technical soundness, compatibility in approach, and adherence to national goals and objectives.

3. Guidelines: Guides include international policies, Federal, and State laws and regulations, directives, manuals, treatment instructions, textbooks or other scientific reference material, precedents, and current practice policy (examples include foreign quarantine import regulations, Export Certification Manual, Code of Federal Regulations, and international trade organizations such as NAPPO, IPPC, WTO, GATT and NAFTA). Uses professional judgment in selecting, interpreting and adapting guidelines to the particular circumstances of complex and sensitive cases. Evaluates local practice and makes recommendations for change and departs from standard procedures if necessary to complete assignments.

4. Complexity: Decisions require interpretation of technical guides. Plans the technical approach and determines the order and priority of individual phases of an assignment. The work involves acting upon complicated trade issues and adapting and modifying control and quarantine methods and techniques consistent with agency guidelines.

5. Scope and Effect: The work involves interpreting regulations or procedures which affect export certification processes which may have national and international implications impacting trade and commerce. As a technical authority, the incumbent provides procedural and technical guidance to the assigned work area. The work performed helps ensure the development and effectiveness of sound biological programs and policies and quality of regulatory decisions made at all levels in PPQ, including politically sensitive trade issues.

6. Personal Contacts: Personal contacts are with agency, line, staff officials, and officials in other agencies, foreign visitors, state and local governments and private industry. There may be certain instances when the COP is required to communicate directly with foreign agriculture officials.

7. Purpose of Contacts: The purpose of the contacts is to exchange information, answer questions and to assure that export certification functions are accomplished. Personal contacts are also used to develop rapport for the exchange of technical information. Contacts are often with individuals from varied disciplines, with widely differing viewpoints, goals and objectives. Regular communication with PPQ Export Service is critical to the integrity of the export program. Uses tact and diplomacy, technical expertise, program experience, and knowledge of

policies and regulations to obtain an acceptable point of view or develop suitable alternative solutions to problems.

8. Physical Demands: The work is generally sedentary and is performed in an office. Use of computers is required. Occasional field survey, investigations and commodity inspections require walking, bending, crouching and climbing at times for prolonged periods. The incumbent must also be able to drive a motor vehicle, sometimes for extended periods of time.

9. Work Environment: Work takes place in offices, various port environs, industrial locations, and a variety of other locations; some which are isolated rural areas.